



Truman National Security Project

Truman Democrats: Strong. Smart. Principled.

DEMOCRATIC TALKING POINTS

Strengthening a Military under Strain and at Risk ^(*)

The Administration's Record

Our Ground Forces are under Enormous Strain

- Nearly every available ground force combat unit has been used in current operations
 - **Army:** Every combat brigade has been deployed and many units are on their second or third tour.
 - **Army National Guard:** More than 95% of the Guard's combat battalions and all but one of the special operations units have been mobilized since 9/11.
 - **Army Reserve:** Only 16% of Reservists remain available for mobilization, but few hold the specialties in demand, including civil affairs, military police and construction engineers.
 - **Marine Corps:** Operating at an unsustainable tempo. Making two deployments per rotation cycle.
 - **Marine Corps Reserve:** All combat units have been mobilized.
- Increased operation tempo (longer, more frequent tours) mean less time for squads and platoons to train as a team before deploying which can affect performance in combat.
- The Army recruits soldiers but we must retain families. Increased operation tempo means little time at home between tours, putting our troops and their families under enormous stress.
 - From 2001-2004, divorce rates tripled among Army officers and increased 50% among soldiers.

The Consequences Our Military is at Risk

- The Army is on a path to being unable to sustain required deployment rates.
- The Administration's continued neglect of our troops is hurting the future of our military, making it difficult to recruit the best Americans and forcing the Army to lower its recruiting standards.
 - 25% more high school dropouts and 33% more who scored poorly on a military aptitude test will be allowed to enlist this year.
- With nearly all of our ground troops deployed, preparing for deployment or recently returned from combat, we have only limited ground forces to deter or respond to additional threats.

The Administration Has Broken Faith with Our Troops

- Secretary Rumsfeld says you have to go to war with the Army you have, not the Army you want. But this Administration went to war with less than the Army we had: too few troops, not enough equipment and no plan for success.
- While the Administration talks of spending cuts, it actually skimped the military and increased the risk to our troops by not providing them all the equipment and supplies they needed. Who knew the Administration considers it wasteful spending to equip our troops and ensure their safety?
- Supporting our troops means more than tough talk and photo ops. It means following the advice of top generals and listening to our troops and veterans when their basic needs are not being met.
- Despite the lip service, this Administration has neglected our troops and their families, prioritizing *[pick your issue]* over the needs of the men and women who serve our country.

(Over)

(*) Based on the National Security Advisory Group paper "The U.S. Military: Under Strain and at Risk."

- An honest and compassionate nation only sends troops to war when it is committed to caring for those that fall. This Administration has turned its back on injured veterans, continually restricting access to medical care and cutting the benefits it owes to those who serve. This is an inexcusable failure of leadership and a slap in the face to those who have sacrificed so much for our country.
- Despite the President's rhetoric, the Administration still does not seem to grasp that we are a nation at war. While our troops and their families have sacrificed greatly, the Administration and the Republican Congress refused to sacrifice anything from their ideological agenda.

What We Should Do To Fix the Problem

Unite all Americans: Bipartisanship and National Service

- We call on the Republican administration to put aside angry partisanship and guarantee that America's military remains the smartest and strongest force in the world.
- We call on the American people to serve their country as we fight abroad. As Democrats, we especially encourage others in our party to serve in the military, as well as in the diplomatic and development organizations working alongside our troops to stabilize countries and keep America safe.

Strengthening our Military

- If we are to succeed in Iraq and continue to secure our nation in the face of future challenges and threats, we must increase the size of our Army by at least 30,000 troops with the specialties the military desperately needs, including special operations forces, linguists and civil affairs specialists.
- We must invest substantial resources in the recovery and transformation of our ground forces to ensure they are organized, manned and equipped for the missions they will face in the future.
- We must rebalance the mix of capabilities among active duty troops, the Reserves and the private sector in order to improve the effectiveness of our military for the host of challenges we face.
- We must reorganize the Reserves and National Guard for the roles they will play, both at home and abroad, in the 21st century.
- We must enhance the capacity of the State Department and our development agencies, whose expertise and personnel will be critical in meeting the challenges of the future.
- Hurricane Katrina highlighted how unprepared we are to respond to threats to the security of our homeland, such as a terrorist attack or natural disaster. We must enhance FEMA and the National Guard's capacity to act and coordinate with other federal, state and local responders.

Military Messaging Tips

- Avoid referring to the military as "broken" or "hollow." It is a long-term risk, but we are not there yet. Now the military sees it as an insult.
- Avoid: "Bring the troops home." Everyone wants to return, but troops want to complete their mission first.
- Avoid referring to stop-loss as a "backdoor draft." Troops hear it as implying they are cowards or selfish.
- Avoid referring to the military as a "job." Troops see it as a long-term commitment and a way of life.
- Do not overdo the body armor issue. Many troops claim extra armor would reduce their mobility.
- Don't portray service members as victims. They see themselves as tough and able to roll with the punches.
- Be careful not to inadvertently insult our troops by declaring their efforts fruitless. Instead say their efforts have been undermined by the Administration.